



Tim
Thoughts





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Tim Thoughts

By

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TO THE READER:

SEVERAL years ago, when I published a little volume of random sketches and essays, under the title of TIM TALKS, it was at the urge of some of my fellow workers, for whom the TALKS had been written originally and published as a column feature in a weekly circulated among them.

Now, in publishing this second volume of similar material, I do so at the urge of friends made thru the first, who, like Oliver Twist, have demanded "More!".

Certainly this is not literature, for I make no pretention to being a *litterateur*. Call it, rather, a collection of random thoughts such as come to an average man who indulges in a bit of philosophical contemplation now and then, with a pipe for company.

Visualizing those who, despite this, seem to want me to share such thoughts with them, I dedicate this little volume of TIM THOUGHTS to folks who are human enough to be sympathetic; healthy enough to be optimistic, and happy enough to be sentimental.

—TIM THRIFT.

Cleveland, Ohio,

1922

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There Was a Time —



THERE WAS A TIME —

THEY wandered down an old-fashioned lane, in an old-fashioned world, on an old-fashioned June night. And the moon cast silvery lanes thru the trees for their young feet to linger along. And the soft wind touched their faces with remindful caresses. And the shadows suggested the text for wonderful silences.

She was sixteen — he was nineteen. They were touched with the witchery of the time and the place and their age. They were under the thrall of their first great emotions. He stood at the verge of his first Rubicon. *But something stirred within the boy that made him hesitate* — and he passed out of the spell.

There was a time —

At twenty-one he had come thru unscathed — heart-whole and fancy free. Now the City lured him. There was a good job awaiting him there. He would leave on the morrow. This was his last night with her.

They rode along in the old phaeton Dick — knowing horse — picked darksome, friendly roads, where he could walk sedately, without touch of rein or bit. They talked of many things — of days past and of days to come. He felt she would welcome his embrace. Once he almost leaned over to enfold her in his arms. He was at the verge of his second Rubicon. *But something stirred within the youth that made him hesitate* — and he passed out of the spell.

There was a time —

The world called him a “gay young dog.” A bachelor — at thirty — with a successful business, worldly comforts, and the brightest prospects before him. He was sought,

far and wide, for he was the life of a party — the “catch” of the town — the favored son of good fortune.

She was a widow — young, wonderful, vital. Of all his fair friends he enjoyed her companionship most. They were much together. The world they moved in whispered and gossiped and intrigued.

The fire smouldered redly in the grate that winter night. The room, rich in its appointments, had never seemed to him so comfortable, so cozy, so homey. He sat on the big davenport with her and gazed into the glowing embers. His thoughts were in a tumult. After all, was n't it about time he was settling down — in a home like this?

He glanced at her thru half-closed eyes. She was greatly to be desired. Warm, tender, human, womanly! He was at the verge of his third Rubicon. *But something stirred within the man that made him hesitate* — and he passed out of the spell.

There was a time —

At fifty he was more successful than ever. Wealth had come to him. True, he was corpulent and there were deep lines in his face, but they still called him a “gay dog,” save that they qualified it with “old” instead of “young.” Vaguely that irritated him, but he did not know why.

Business took him back to the old town — the scene of his boyhood days. There, in the quiet charm of an old home, he found her again — she of sixteen; she of the old-fashioned lane, in the old-fashioned world, on the old-fashioned June night.

And he was glad that this was so; that no man had entered her life; that she had come to the fullness of her womanhood — and beyond — with all the grace and charm

and character she had given promise of in the early years.

So he saw much of her, in that quaint old sitting-room, in that house that breathed of lavender and old lace. And, as the days passed, and he over-stayed his time and his business, he grew to know, deep in that heart which had been never really touched, that he loved her.

And, with the realization, *something stirred within him which bade him hesitate no longer*. He was at the verge of his fourth Rubicon — and he crossed it.

She listened quietly, compassionately, to his plea. Then she spoke:

“We have both lived alone so long, have become so set in our ways, have formed such habits of a lifetime, that it would be unfair — even disastrous — to attempt to re-mold our lives. The thing you ask can never be.”

There was a time —

At sixty, midst that luxury which wealth can bring, he sits — alone. In his house of life no patter of baby feet across the floors; no soothing hand upon his brow when fever comes; no loved voice to speed him on his way; no clinging arms to welcome his return. But —

There was a time !

A Leaf of Life

A LEAF OF LIFE

THE God of Fate was asleep at the switchboard. Those hands which controlled, thru the countless connections they made, the destiny of millions of earth folk, lay clasped on his gently heaving breast. A soft rumble, as of distant thunder, betokened that his sleep was sound.

The God of Jest, ever adventuring, came upon the scene. In playful mood he stole past the sleeping Fate, and noting two idle lines of destiny, plugged them in in the board before him. Fate stirred, awakening, and Jest scampered off again, laughing to himself at the trick he had played.

.

Peter, student and philosopher, straightened up at the reading table over which he had been bending in study for many hours, and closed his book. The impulse had come upon him—he could not have told why—to throw the musty tome across the room and seek the mysteries of the night.

He arose and flung open the window. The air was soft and alluring. Below him the lights of the city twinkled with amusement as they beheld his spectacled eyes gazing so somberly upon them.

He turned again to his book, but his mind refused to concentrate upon it. There was an urge in his soul that would not be denied. Practical always, he defined it. He craved companionship—bright lights, gay music, laughter, frivolity. . . .

So Peter, serious-minded Peter, a victim of the God of Jest, put on his coat and hat and passed into the night, an

actor in an intrigue which Fate had never planned for him.

.
Mazie, third-row chorus, would have told you, an hour before, that this was the life! But now, as she hurried into her street clothes, and paused before the mirror for a last dab of powder, it suddenly sickened her.

She remembered her face as she had looked at it that first performance — a face rosy with the health of the country life she had led — and the white thing that gazed at her now frightened her.

She crossed the room and flung open the window. Although it opened upon a court, littered with rubbish, the night was kind and veiled all save the myriad star eyes that saw and understood.

Dreamful, she paused for a moment, then turned again to the room, unheeding the chatter and shrill laughter of her companions. There was an urge in her soul that would not be stilled. Her intuition defined it. She craved companionship — a home, the soft light of a table lamp, the contented laugh of some one who cared, the scamper of little feet. . . .

So Mazie, third-row chorus, a victim of the God of Jest, put on her coat and hat and passed into the night, an actress in an intrigue which Fate had never planned for her.

.
It happened at Sixth and Broad.

Peter was hurrying along, impelled by a haste without reason, for he had no destination. His head was down, buried in his collar, for his thoughts were busy with this problem of the night.

Mazie, too, was hurrying. She knew not why nor whither. The mood was strange to her. She sought the Grail of Life, unconscious of the quest.

So it happened. They bumped together, as two persons are destined to bump, if they will travel buried in their thoughts and arrive at street intersections simultaneously.

Mazie was the first to recover. She beheld Peter — serious-minded Peter — a very flushed and embarrassed young man.

Then Peter found himself. He beheld Mazie, third-row chorus Mazie, a very flushed and angry young woman.

But both Peter and Mazie saw more — what, I assure you my reader, I do not know, not being akin to the gods — for when Mazie suddenly smiled Peter smiled too. After that all I know is that they passed into the night, hand in hand, as simply as little children.

But I've often wondered whether the joke was n't on the God of Jest after all!

“ Ask Dad — He Knows ”

“ASK DAD — HE KNOWS”

THUMBING idly thru the pages of a popular magazine, the slogan of an advertiser caught my eye — “Ask Dad — He Knows” — You have seen the same admonition many times, for it is the pivot of a great advertising campaign. But I wonder if it ever brought to you the message that it brought to me — a message probably entirely apart from its original intent.

Let us see:

.
The argument was heated. The four boys involved in it had almost reached blows. Their shrill voices rose higher and higher. Suddenly one, leather-lunged, made himself heard above the tumult. “I’ll ask Dad — he knows!” he shouted. The wrangling died away. The verdict was final.

.
A crucial moment had come in her young life. Inexperienced in such things, she had tried vainly to come to a decision. She felt that, whatever the answer, it would influence all her future. So she wrestled with the problem until, suddenly, the calming thought came to her — “I’ll ask Dad — he knows!”

.
At thirty he faced a business crisis. His rise had been rapid. He had become a power in his world. And now there were those who sought his downfall. The fight had been long, bitter, nerve-racking. His back was against the wall. He was thru — unless. . . . Like a lightning

flash came the remembrance of that haven of refuge — “ I’ll ask Dad — he knows! ” was his decision.

.
Oh you wonderful dads who know! You who are the faith and the hope and the trust and the inspiration of the family! You who go your quiet, patient way thru the years, sheltering, watching, training those tender plants God has placed in your garden of life! You who are the arbiters of those human destinies ; the Supreme Court of those human frailties! You who, because you are you, must wear the mask and keep the faith, even when your brave hearts falter and your strong souls are weak with dread!

Oh you kindly dads who know! Day after day you round the hours, faithful at your bread and butter tasks — the paternal instinct giving you the strength to be the men you are. Husband, father, lover, comrade, friend — the silent griefs you bear; the sacrifices you make; the personal ambitions you forego, that you may lay upon the altar of the home the pledge of your fidelity to the tasks life has allotted you — to be the dads who know!

Oh you unsung dads who know! How great is your responsibility! How keen must be the realization of your weakness and your strength! How potent your power — to others; how impotent it must seem to you!

.
“ Ask Dad — He Knows ” —

To me it seems a benediction.

The Silent Partner

THE SILENT PARTNER

THE business day had been long, irritating, nerve-racking. There was a dull ache in his eyes; his body was lax and unresponsive; all the vigor and vim that were customarily his had departed. He was tired — dog tired — of business — of everything. What he craved more than anything in the world — and did not realize it, being a man — was mothering.

He closed his desk with an irritable bang; struggled into his coat; slapped his hat on his head; started homeward. His office companions gazed after him. “How’d you like that grouch for a fireside companion?” queried one. The others laughed. *Sympathy!*

After a car ride that seemed interminable — in an atmosphere of a hundred human odors — he reached his street. The pain in his eyes was acute now and his head throbbed in unison with it. Perhaps it was this that caused him to stumble up the walk without noticing the house was dark.

As he opened the door a sudden chill smote his heart. Why no welcome — no light — no evidence of life? This was strange indeed! In the two years of his married life he could not recall a similar instance.

His hand groped for the switch and the lights in the living room flashed on. Everything was as of old — his favorite chair beside the reading lamp — the mahogany table, covered with books and magazines — the Victrola in the corner —

Hurriedly he went from room to room, upstairs and down. The house was in order thruout. But he was its only occupant.

He returned to the living room — dropped into his chair. This was his house, but it was not his *home*. It was as dead as the fire that had ashed in the grate the evening before. The life, the brightness, the glow had departed. Something was lacking — the one thing, save one — that could fill four walls with color and charm — a personality — his *wife* !

The one thing, save one ! His mind dwelt for a moment on that exception. *Children !* But they had not been so blessed. Perhaps it was the thing that made the other so acute. Perhaps its lack had drawn them closer together than most married folks.

His thoughts surged on, intermingled with that pain in his eyes which stabbed unceasingly.

Had he been as fair with her as he might have been ? He had been out in the world every day, meeting new people, enjoying new experiences, living the life of change and excitement. He had expanded, improved, grown. While she, confined in the cocoon of domestic life, had not enjoyed equal opportunities. Her round of daily household duties suddenly seemed too mean and small for such a personality.

He lashed himself on. He had been selfish indeed ! He had taken her, filled with spirit and life, from surroundings that gave her every opportunity, and had made her his prisoner. There, in this prison he called home, she was to rest content with the privilege of serving him, of administering to his wants, of catering to the whims of his idle hours.

True, they had gone out occasionally — to the theatre — to a friend's — to the "movies" — True, they had entertained, too. But, after all, had n't the burden of such entertainment been hers ?

Now she had gone. He did not know where. He was

as one dazed. How could he go on without her? Who would there be to soothe him when he came home, as he had come home this evening, mind and body weary? Who would there be to mother and humor him?

Suddenly the door opened; a sweep of fresh air smote his fevered face. He turned. His wife was standing before him.

“Where in the devil have you been and why is n’t dinner ready?” he greeted her irritably.

.

Oh Life, how subtle are thy little mysteries!



On the Influence of Reading



ON THE INFLUENCE OF READING

“**S**HOW me what they read and I'll tell you what they 'll be—” This fragment from a spirited discussion in the smoking compartment of the train came to my ears as I passed the door.

I did not pause to hear the conclusion of the statement. The dominant voice was sufficient. My imagination bridged the gap. It also furnished me with some food for contemplation as I resumed my seat in the Pullman.

Considering reading:

There was the case of “Bull,” back in the old days in the old town. “Bull” was an avidious reader—of a certain type of “literature”. In school he found it difficult to scan the classics for the class; but in the loft of the barn, betimes, he eagerly devoured, without lack of understanding, those valiant deeds recorded by the trenchant pens of such worthy authors as Burt L. Standish, Nick Carter, Cap. Collier and Frank Reed.

Indeed, “Bull” was probably the best customer of our village book emporium. On rainy afternoons, in particular, he could be found, bedded in the fragrant hay, a “nickel library” in hand, lost to the world of mere material things. At such times, I know, nothing save his mother's voice announcing the evening meal could bring him back to earth again.

So much for “Bull”. We've placed his status as a follower of literature.

Now let us consider the case of “Pinny”.

“Pinny” was the antithesis of “Bull”. I remember him well. He was a pale-faced wisp of a boy, always ser-

ious and restrained. He, too, was a great reader; but what a world of difference in the selection of his authors. Plato, Pliny, Socrates and Seneca were, as I recall, his favorites. Need I name more? You get the trend of his taste in reading.

The gap between these two leading “readers” of those boyhood days was as the gap between the poles.

As I recalled these things I smiled to myself, for I felt I knew how my travelling companion of the smoker would have analyzed the outcome.

But he would have been wrong.

I happen to know the life history of both “Bull” and “Pinny”.

“Bull,” I dare say, you’ve heard preach, for he’s a minister with more than a local reputation.

“Pinny” has also achieved distinction. When I saw him last he had started his fourth burlesque troupe on the road and he told me it was the best looking bunch of “beef” he had ever selected.

“Show me what they read and I’ll tell you what they’ll be —”

Uh-huh! — sometimes!

The Case of Mary Smith

THE CASE OF MARY SMITH

THIS might be called the case of Mary Smith versus Mary Smith, although if you were to look up the legal records in our town you would find it had to do with what was the most discussed divorce proceedings of one year.

Mary Smith — the wife of the Hon. Harrison Hadley Smith — the magnate of our village — enters “right” on our little stage of life, destined to play an important part in our tragedy — or comedy — let the gods decide!

Mary Smith — the wife of plain John Smith, a humble citizen of our village — enters “left,” destined, too, to play an important part in our domestic drama.

Imagine now, audience — a judge, attorneys, attaches of the court, spectators, representatives of the press — all the cast and “props” of a divorce case that has set a small town on its ears.

Having set the stage and arranged the players, we now exercise our prerogative and brush aside all legal technicalities. This is not the chronological history of a trial domestic, but a story of domestic trials.

Consider the case developed and set forth. The judge is speaking.

“The point I do not understand,” he says impressively, “is why we have *two* Mary Smiths as plaintiffs in this case.”

Mary Smith — Mrs. Harrison Hadley Smith — turns and stares haughtily at Mary Smith — plain Mrs. John Smith.

Mary Smith — plain Mrs. John Smith — flushes. She turns to the judge appealingly.

“Please, Judge, Your Honor, Sir,” she falters, “I did not know. They told me I was to come here to a trial—I haven’t done anything.”

The Judge gazes at her with a whimsical smile. A sudden thought crosses his judicial mind. He speaks:

“Mary Smith,” he says kindly, “I take it that you do not seek a divorce from John Smith.”

“Oh, no sir,” is the tremulous reply, as her eyes seek the figure of a man in working clothes who sits at the back of our stage.

The Judge’s whimsical smile deepens.

“Perhaps you’ll tell us why, Mary Smith. For it seems to this Court that you have by far the better case. I know your history, Mary Smith, and you have not had an easy time. I know you have worked your fingers to the bone; that you have been denied the luxuries other women have enjoyed; that your pleasures have been almost nil; that you have lost the prettiness that was yours as a girl, given it in the upbringing of your family; that you have found naught in your married life save disillusionment and hardship.

“I know these things, Mary Smith, for I know the life of you and John, and knowing, I want you to tell us why, in the face of them, you do not seek to separate yourself from them.”

He pauses for her reply.

Mary Smith pales and reddens by turns. Again her eyes seek her husband, as though to take courage from him for her reply. When she speaks, her voice is low but clear.

“We’ve had a hard time, Judge,” she says, “but my John loves me and that makes the burden light.”

“Ah, now we come to the crux of the matter!” ejaculates the Judge.

“How do you know John loves you?” He hurls the question at her.

Mary Smith does not falter.

“Because he has *told me so every day* of our married life,” she says triumphantly.

The Judge leans back in his chair.

“Mary Smith, real plaintiff in this case,” he says, addressing Mrs. Harrison Hadley Smith, “why do you—granted all your life everything that a woman could desire—your slightest wish gratified—your most unreasonable demand complied with—seek separation from your husband?”

And Mary Smith, the fortunate, reduced to a tearful, unhappy woman, makes reply.

“Because he no longer loves me,” she sobs.

“How do you know that?” his Honor demands.

“Because *he never tells me so*,” she says accusingly, with her eyes on the Honorable Harrison Hadley Smith at the rear of our stage.

Divorce granted—

Case dismissed—

Oh, Solomon Reader, this is your play. You are the Judge and the Jury. May yours be the responsibility of the decision.

Our play is done. The curtain falls.

Small Town Stuff

SMALL TOWN STUFF

HE gazed around his luxurious offices, then, looking at me, thru me and beyond me, with a far-away look in his eyes, he spoke of the thing that evidently lay closest to his heart:

“I envy you of the small town,” he said. “That is the life! There folks are real folks. You have neighbors, friends, a social life we of the city never know. Your days are peaceful and serene. There is none of this hustle and bustle. You have time to cultivate the worthwhile things in life. Yours is the ideal existence; and, believe me, that’s where you’re going to find me when I get ready to quit and retire—in a small town environment where I can pass my days in peace. You *live*, while I only *exist*!”

I thought of many things—I knew that he was city-born, city-bred and city-wise—but I neither affirmed nor denied his views. Once to every man there comes the call of the simple life—a small town or a few acres or even the solitude of forest or plain. Just as “sweet sixteen” pensively dreams of becoming a nurse or an actress, and “eager eighteen” longs for adventures on land and on sea.

So I might have spoken—I of the small town life—but I only passed on, leaving him to his dreams.

Ten years later, almost to the day, he settled in our midst. He purchased the old Bigelow place on Elm street and took over a little business in the village—“just to keep his hand in,” as he explained.

We gave him a hearty welcome, for new residents were a rarity in our town, and he soon found a place in our life—that life which goes its tranquil round year after year.

So time went on.

Yesterday, as I was passing his office, he called me in. Plainly there was something on his mind — something long pent-up that had finally reached flood stage. He spoke:

“I do n’t know where I ever got this small town stuff!” he exploded. “I’m sick of it. Here your business is everybody’s business. Here, at every turn, you find envy, malice and selfishness. Progress left this town behind twenty years ago. And the monotony is making an old man of me. Breakfast, dinner, supper is my daily round; with occasionally a poor picture show or a church social or a few neighbors who come in to retail the latest gossip. Everything you do that shows you’ve got a little red blood in your veins subjects you to criticism.”

A far-away look came in his eyes and he then spoke of the thing that evidently lay closest to his heart.

“I’m going back to the city. That is the life! There people do not concern themselves about you. You come and go as you please. There there is always something doing — the theatre, the club, a dance, a social game. There there’s pep and ginger and go. You see something, you do something, you get somewhere. There you *live*, while here you only *exist*!”

I thought of many things — I who was village-born, village-bred and village-wise — but I neither affirmed nor denied his views. Once to every man — and oh what fortune if but once! — there must come disillusionment. So it had come to him.

Today he’s back in the hum of things — a contented man.
Today I’m still in the drone of things — a contented man.
And the world goes on, with a smile at the humor of life.

The Doff Deserving



THE DOFF DESERVING

AS FAR as the eye could see — the desert — the sky — somewhere a horizon blent of the two. All day the Transcontinental had carried me thru these vast wastes, with never a tree, a stream or a mountain range to vary the monotony of sand, sage-brush and cactus.

And as hour after hour passed by with only this prospect before my eyes, some of the desolation and the loneliness of it all entered my soul. It was well, I reflected, that one could look away from the window and see human beings — traveling companions — for outside, in that tremendous sweep of barren plains, lurked the madness that comes with such complete isolation.

Then, suddenly, a speck in the desert, that grew larger and larger as we drew upon it, until it assumed definite proportions and became an identity. It was a house — if one could dignify it with that name. Rough it was, and unsightly. But there was evidence of a woman's occupancy in the white curtains at the window and a red geranium that bloomed beside the door.

A little distance away a team could be seen, hitched to a plow; and, as we drew closer, I saw that the person plowing was a woman. A young woman, dressed in overalls, with her hair tucked under an old felt hat.

She stopped her work and gazed at the train as it passed. And she was fair to look upon — such a woman as would have graced any social gathering. And there was evidence of perfect health in her smiling face and the conscious strength of her carriage.

That was all I saw — a glimpse — for we were soon be-

yond this evidence of human habitation and the panorama of the desert rolled before us, unbroken and unchanged.

“A homesteader,” I said to myself, softly.

And my imagination projected and expanded as I turned the thought over in my mind.

Here was high courage indeed! To take up a homestead in that vast waste ; to brave the loneliness ; to wrest from that barren soil a fertility that meant life ; to forego the comforts of civilization, the pleasures of society, the advantages of cities ; alone, to pioneer and found a home!

I turned in my seat and looked back. Already all my eyes saw was a speck on the horizon ; but solemnly, as one who performs a rite, I *took off my hat* to that woman. And with the act went my profound admiration.

.
My companion and I walked along the street of a great city — a street famed thruout the world. It was four o'clock in the afternoon and the parade of fashion was on. About us, passing in endless procession, were the men and women of the world, suited and gowned with exquisite detail.

As we sauntered along we came to a street intersection where traffic was at a standstill. We paused and I noticed near us an imposing limousine. Reclining indolently in its cushioned luxury was a young woman. She was smart, in all that smart signifies in the life of a city ; and beautiful, in all that beauty means when specialists have turned out perfect handiwork.

My friend noted my glance and followed it. Then — for he knew her — he smiled and raised his hat. So I, too, *took off my hat* to her.

Traffic resumed, we moved on.

“Who is she?” I queried.

There was a peculiar smile on his face. “One of the great fraternity I call ‘’Stead of Home,’” he replied.

My mind flashed back. The “Homesteader!” — The “’Stead of Home!” To both I had taken off my hat.

But what a world of difference marked the act!

Perdu!

PERDU!

WE approach that season of the year when a young man's fancy turns to thoughts of baseball — or love — depending upon what fancy of young man he may be.

Today I saw the sand-lot champions warming up; in the dusk last night there were couples strolling in the park. A strange association of impressions you may think, yet bridged with the thought that the future success of both depends upon teamwork.

To you, my bird, who may in this phase of the moon and your life find the nest-building instinct stirring within you — a few words:

Do your dreaming by sunlight and your reasoning by moonlight. There are Helpmates and Hindermates, and the time to decide which you will have accompany you on the Great Adventure is at the threshold of the enterprise and not at the end of the journey.

With a Helpmate, one can set forth, in the Springtime of Life, with high expectancy of reaching the Land of Heart's Desire and dwelling there in peace and plenty the allotted days. Though the journey may be rough and at times the burden heavy, the path somehow seems smoother and the load much lighter for the shoulder-to-shoulder comradeship of a Helpmate.

With a Hindermate one starts upon the journey to his goal with a false step and a handicap. He wallows thru Sloughs of Despondency, struggles across Deserts of Hopelessness, and at the end reaches the bleak and barren land of Old Age, weary, broken, disillusioned. Like a pack upon his back, growing heavier with each step, his Hindermate

has borne him down to earth.

“But,” you query, “how can I be sure I’ve made the right selection?”

Youth or man, I cannot counsel you. Love is of the heart and not of the mind. Where feeling rules reason is dethroned. I can only wish you luck — that you may get in this great lottery a prize.

For you see — or, if stricken, cannot see — any advice I might give would end as futile words when you were face to face with the reality of Her.

Perdu !

The Christmas Gift

THE CHRISTMAS GIFT

A WARMTH of Christmas cheer was in the air of Fountain Town. It was manifest in the cheery greeting of each passer-by and in every smiling face and sparkling eye. The shops along the old main street reflected it and shone forth with unaccustomed splendor, their windows revealing thru diamond panes of frost treasures dear to the hearts of young and old.

At a corner of the Square stood a goodly row of Christmas trees and piles of mistletoe and holly. Now and then past them, on the crunching snow, a sleigh went swiftly by with a merry chime of bells, or a roomy bob-sled, more cumbersome, moved along with a slower pace.

Expectancy was keen upon the face of every child, and one might have caught it, too, deep within their elders' eyes. The morrow was Christmas day, when families met around the festal board in reunion and tokens of the season were exchanged. This was indeed the time of times when hearts should be most happy and every care forgotten. And so indeed they were!

But even with the season's cheer, there were for some those long thoughts that must come when the mind steals back to mounds that hold the dear and dead. When in the dusk memory's cinematograph projects upon the screen of dreams once-familiar scenes and faces; voices long-stilled mingle again in the charm of conversation, and the shadows become beloved forms that sit with them and commune with them in tender retrospection.

Such a one was the little, bowed old woman who lived alone in the tiny cottage at the end of Lover's Lane (oh

the irony of the name!) and to her went out the sympathies of many a villager.

Sixty years before, to the day, she had come into the world in that very cottage and made brighter the life of the humble couple there. At twenty she was a comely maid — the years had led her gently — and sunshine was oftenest within her eyes and laughter on her lips.

Then the Stranger came into her quiet life and held before her dazzlingly those golden prospects that have lured so many and turned to tinsel for them in the end. Willingly she gave all to him, and willingly she suffered in the aftermath that came. It was the retribution for the sin — and to her a lifetime seemed but a moment of atonement.

Her son was a solace in the early years, but in young manhood, when the brand of his parentage seemed to sear his very soul, he vanished into the world and she heard of him no more. But she endured her punishment patiently. Never to her once appealed the injustice of her sacrifice — too poignant were her memories, too keen her realization of the price that must be paid.

Her parents had passed away a few years after tragedy had come into her life, leaving her the cottage and a little income that sufficed for her simple wants. So the seasons had come and gone thru forty years: all the same to her whether dreamy June or ruddy December. Unobtrusively she had gone about her simple round of life, neither repelling nor encouraging the advances of the kindly village folk, and never uttering a word of complaint. When opportunity availed she was a gentle friend in time of need, and many a neighboring cottage had seen her unselfish service in an urgent hour.

So it was the villagers thought of her in this season of good cheer, while pity stirred their hearts. Well they knew that for her there was no family group — though she had many an invitation to join a neighboring one — and only the specters of the past would sit with her and move with her thru the Christmas day.

.
Within her tiny cottage on this Christmas Eve the little, bowed old woman sat alone before the dying fire. Fitful, flashing flames lighted now and then her wan white face and brought out in sharp relief the patient fortitude limned upon it. Her hands were clasped together in her lap and between them was a baby's stocking and a little hood. At her feet a few broken home-made toys lay and beside her, in a little chest, were other treasures of the past.

Her eyes gazed steadily into the fire and at times a tear would steal down a withered cheek, while her hands clasped the tighter.

Her thoughts were very far away, out upon the restless sea of memory. Ofttimes they were storm tossed and tempests of heartaches raged within; again, the waters were at rest and sweet and tender recollections came.

In this hour she lived again the fragrant days of love, when life seemed too full for realization and the wine of madness was in her cup; the later time when she stumbled thru an unreal world, besieged by strange phantasies and fears; when a little heart beat with hers and she came very near the great white throne thru motherhood; then, finally, along the mazes of those years when she reared her son — on — on — to that land of afterwhiles where nothing mattered, nothing was or was to be — save, at last, the end!

Slowly she slipped from the chair and knelt beside it, pressing the little stocking and the hood to her trembling lips. Her eyes were heavy with a weight of unshed tears. After a long while her voice broke the tense silence haltingly with the little prayer she had taught her boy to say. Again she felt his warm body nestling to her and a tousled head was buried in her lap —

*Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray the Lord my soul to keep;
If I should die before I wake,
I pray the Lord my soul to take.*

.
So the night passed and the Christmas day came in, bringing with it to the little, bowed old woman God's most precious gift — the everlasting sleep and the great eternal peace.

The Chicken and the Goose

THE CHICKEN AND THE GOOSE

SHE minced down the street in front of me, dressed in the height of fashion — and a notch or two beyond. Her hair was heinous and henna.

“*Some chicken!*” exclaimed a voice behind me.

But at the corner she turned and started back and I caught a glimpse of her face.

“*Some goose!*” I ejaculated.

For it was plain to see, thru the enamel and paint, that this was not a young girl, but an old woman — probably a grandmother.

The sight sickened me. Plainly, I am too old-fashioned to accept the new order of things — that order which refuses to acknowledge the passage of Time and attempts to counterfeit Youth, in the delusion that the world will accept such spurious juvenility.

Youth is Youth! Old Age is Old Age! Each has its time and its place. But one can never be the physical counterpart of the other.

It's a pitiful thing to see old age fight for its youth. To see how frantically it clings to what it used to be. To see the attempts to camouflage the inevitable inroads of Time; the small deceits practiced to prove they are not there. To witness the losing fight against the wane of beauty and to discern so clearly the many artifices that the vanquished flaunt for the real.

And it's all so useless and so foolish!

Each period of life has its compensations — Childhood, Youth, Middle-Age and Old-Age — the Spring, the Sum-

mer, the Autumn, the Winter of our span of existence. Winter can be no more Spring than Autumn can be Summer. Yet we love them all, for those manifestations of nature that are so distinctively their own.

And yet, youth *can* be perennial. But it is enduring, not in the physical sense, but in the mental and spiritual senses. One keeps young in one's thoughts, in one's outlook upon life. And as age brings with it wisdom and experience, to combine with the untarnished imagery of youth and its fresh imagination, what a wonderful mental attitude toward life an old person can have!

Where are the grandmothers of yesterday? Those dear old ladies we all loved. With their snowy hair, the ruddy tint upon their cheeks, the bright snap within their eyes. With their gentle mien and their old-world graciousness. They knew their frailties; that for them there could be no more the activities of years ago. But there was no wistful look upon their faces; no wish to be other than they were — grandmothers, in very truth, with the tasks of life left to younger folks, but with hearts that kept young that they might rejoice or console with the youth for which they beat.

What mattered it if betimes, in the soft shadows, the wrinkled hands relaxed the knitting or the mending that they held, and the mind wandered back again along the lanes and pains of yester-years? That there would come the wistful wish that silent others might be there to share those declining years? That in that thoughtful hour, old, remembered scenes and faces were conjured up; little feet pattered again across the empty playroom of the house of life, and those beloved of other days came to sit beside one and commune with one in the twilight?

After all, was not that one of the compensations of old

age — to have tender memories come with their soft balm ? To reflect, in the frankincense and myrrh of meditation, upon such a host of sunny days and happy years and wonderful events of the used-to-be ? For truly, one had only to open one's eyes to be again in the midst of the newer generation and to have as a recompense for not living as *of* it, the greater thing of living *for* it.

Dear old understanding grandmothers — with your sweet faces in their setting of lavender and lace — where have you gone ? You seem to be of the vanished things — only a memory, “as faint, and sweet, and frail, as music.”

I confess I cannot accept your modern counterpart.

Chatter-Chatter



CHATTER-CHATTER

CONVERSATION is a great thing. It is a medium thru which we allay the tedium of many weary hours. Thru it we teach and are taught; we entertain and are entertained; we bore others and are bored ourselves.

Conversation is as varied as the individuals conversing. Its topics range from the old stand-by, the weather, to the limit of human knowledge. It is a theme in itself that could take up the conversational hours of days.

But — there is a place for conversation, and particularly that form of conversation which results from the pure love of conversing.

That kind of conversation is appropriately termed *chatter*.

Webster defines this: "To talk idly, carelessly, incessantly."

How many conversationalists of this type do you know? Many!

Take business, for instance. The needless chatter, the useless chatter, that goes on in the average business office during working hours is the bane of the business man who interprets business as something at which to be busy.

Some of it is deliberately chattered by the time-killer in the routine of his avocation, but much of it is simply thoughtlessness. Those indulging in their favorite pastime of lingo-gymnastics do not realize that they are wasting minutes and hours they should devote to their work.

Do not mistake the point. Conversation is as necessary in business as the three R's. Properly used, it conserves time, clarifies ideas, speeds up work. And even conver-

sation which is purely social in nature need not be entirely barred, for a business must be thoroughly humanized to be most successful.

But conversation with a purpose, whether it be to discuss a business proposition or pass the time o' day pleasantly, and chatter, devoted to making "much ado about nothing," are two different and remotely related things.

"I said to him" and "He said to me" — or — "I said to her" and "She said to me" — will be recognized as familiar introductions to the banalities of the ardent devotee of chattering. And that which follows leads nowhere; adds nothing to the sum total of useful human knowledge, and might far better be wasted on some distant desert's air.

The magpie is the chatterer of the bird world.

The magpies of the business world are just as vociferous.

Is there nothing that can be done with such spendthrifts of conversation? Perhaps not — with Congress setting such an eminent national example — but —

Here's hoping!

An Elegy in Prose



AN ELEGY IN PROSE

THE richest man in ten countries lay on his death bed. Outside the quiet room where he was breathing his last, the world waited expectantly. Here was news in the making; news that would shake markets; news that would send vibrations from pole to pole, wherever men and money toiled, in cities and in deserts, in civilization and in the waste places.

The fatal hour had come — unexpected — a stroke — a blow as startling as that delivered by a daggered hand in the dark.

There was no family to gather around in this last hour. He had planned alone, built alone, toiled alone — and now he had commanded that he be left alone to die. One by one his business associates and his “friends” had departed from the room.

Outside it was an April day. Nature was awakening, with that wondrous transformation of this season of the year; birds trilled their mating song; trees and shrubs were budding into leaf; the sky was laced here and there with fleecy clouds; the sun smiled and gently warmed the quickening land; a faint breeze stole thru the awakening brush and grass. It was the hopeful hour of birth; not the hopeless hour of death.

But within — how different! The great windows — windows that looked out across parks and lakes and dells — were closely curtained. The room was somber toned, its heavy shadows broken only here and there with the feeble rays that filtered from a tiny lamp that stood beside the bed.

The richest man in ten countries lay passive, save that

now and then a slight tremor shook his frame. But his eyes were bright with that second sight that comes sometimes to those who are at the threshold of unknown things.

Then, suddenly, it seemed to him that the shadows of the room took shape, merged into forms, and these ranged themselves about his bed. A sorry, motley company of wraiths, hideous and unkempt.

The stricken man half raised himself and with a gesture in which there was a semblance of his old command, whispered hoarsely: "Who are you? I bid you all begone!"

The unpleasant company smirked and smiled with crooked smiles. "You should know us," said their spokesman. "We have been your boon companions for these many years. We have stuck to you thru thick and thin. You can not bid us begone, for we are of you — *we are you!* But since your memory seems to fail, meet us once again."

And so he introduced them, one by one, as one who would humor a child who sulks: "Master, meet Greed, and Avarice, and Selfishness, and Lust, and Envy, and Malice and Hate." Whereupon he laughed — a dreadful laugh that vibrated in the stillness of the room like a chord of the song of the lost.

The man shuddered and closed his eyes. His lean fingers — like talons — worked convulsively. A low moan escaped his lips. Was this, then, to be the end? Were these to be the companions of his final hour?

After the laugh, a silence; and when he dared to look again the room was as before — somber-toned, deep-shadowed, without life. The company — those boon companions of the past — had gone.

Then the shadows seemed to lift. The room was flooded with a light that dazzled and affrighted him. About his bed another company stood. A company fair to look upon, with smiling eyes and happy mien. A company of comely folks, pleasant to behold.

Again he raised himself and again he spoke, albeit his voice had a strange note in it — a note he failed to recognize as his own.

“Who are you?” he queried expectantly. “I have had unpleasant dreams. I asked to die alone. But I am afraid. I bid you stay with me — life is not for long.”

The pleasant company smiled and the room grew brighter still.

Their leader spoke, gently, lovingly, as one addresses a child who has erred, but still a child whom one loves:

“We are strangers to you,” he said; “but we have always wanted to know you. We have come many times, thru many years, but you have always barred the door. You shall meet us now, for in this hour it is given you to see that which you have lost thru not knowing us before.”

So he introduced them, one by one.

“This is Youth,” he said, presenting a comely lad. “Once upon a time you were as he and the blood coursed joyously thru your veins. Love, Life and Laughter were your boon companions and the lilt of happiness was in your heart. This Youth was yours, oh man of riches, with the gift of the gods beside. But that was yesterday — a long yesterday ago.

“The next is Love. She came to you just when Youth was relinquishing its hold — came with the lure of soft June

nights and warm caresses and those precious gifts that only Love can bring. But you were cold. Ambition counselled you. 'Put Love out of your life; you need naught of her,' said he. And you obeyed.

"Now meet Fellowship. It has been many years since you have heard his name linked with yours. There was a time, man of riches, when he meant the world to you, but that was in those golden days when you knew Youth as well. Long ago he reluctantly departed from your side, for there was naught in common between you. His impulses were generous, his heart was light, his eyes looked out upon a friendly world. Fellowship could not be for you, for you had decreed that Self should serve instead.

"Here's Laughter, too. How long since you have known her? The years are many, master. She is of the days of the care-free heart and joyousness. She is of the hours when you knew beauty and caught the glint of dreams. She is of the butterflies and flowers. Long since the echoes of her chimes died within the walls of your house of life.

"With her is Happiness, her constant companion. Happiness, as Youth, was once, twice, thrice, many times, within your grasp. But she eluded you. Happiness is not for those who surround themselves with sorry company. Happiness cannot abide within the dwelling place of care. Nay, Happiness is for those who know the fulsomeness of life; those who *live*, money man, not those who drag their way thru a monotony of years.

"Faith is next. Faith, meet one who lost you long ago, and with you lost all that makes a life worth while. If he had parted from you with reluctance, Faith, I'm sure you would have returned to him in time. But he discarded you lightly, as one disposes of an inconsequential thing and there

was no way open for you to find his heart. Gaze upon him, Faith, for, losing you, he is but the semblance of what he was when you abode within his house.

“Finally, here is Charity. She it was you put away first of all. For was it not Greed, your friend, who said, ‘What have you to do with Charity? She will but beggar you!’? So it has been long since that you knew Charity; that she brought warm impulses to your heart; that she stretched out your hand with largess to those less fortunate than you.

“I—I am Pity. The sole survivor of this noble company with which you once made merry. And, in my way, I am Memory, too—that Memory you feared to face in this last hour. Yet that Memory you tremulously, pitifully, bid come to you—*now*—and command others depart, that they may not know your wistful wish.

“But I—Pity and Memory as one,—I have come too late, oh man of riches. Had you ordered otherwise—for it was ever within your power—my companions might have solaced your final hour—sent you back to whence you came, with a tender smile on lips where dwelt eternal peace.

“Now, now, my companions must away, for you denied them far too long, and I, as Pity only, shall remain.”

The speaker ceased. The richest man in ten countries saw, with glazing eyes, the tears that stole down his wrinkled cheeks—and that was all!

The Riddle: Man



THE RIDDLE: MAN

MAN, we are told, was created to “have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.” So it was ordained and so it has obtained since the beginning. And yet, how peculiar a creature is man!

Place him upon a pinnacle and he is one thing; drop him into the abyss and he is another. Make him one of a crowd of his fellows and he acts thus; set him alone and he acts so. Give him riches and witness a miser; reduce him to poverty and behold a prodigal.

Man is ever a study in variables. And yet — why not?

Let us consider the influences which bear upon him to make him what he is — if heredity be given credence in shaping a life.

The span of the average generation is twenty years. Thus, forty years back four ancestors are shown; sixty years, eight; eighty years, sixteen; one hundred, thirty-two.

Now let us seek even farther. Take five hundred years — not a great length of time in the history of the world — only seventy-odd years before the discovery of America — and what do we find?

Just this — in that span of five centuries a man's — any man's — ancestors amount to the amazing total of sixty-seven million, one hundred and eight thousand, eight hundred and sixty-four.

Man is a study in variables. Is it any wonder? Consider the influence, though even remote, of even a portion of that sixty-seven million men and women.

Sit back in your chair and contemplate that panorama of human life—the good and the bad, the rich and the poor, the high and the low, the learned and the ignorant. Then guess—as guess you must—at the traits of character which have been handed down thru that vast line, to find expression finally in some act of man.

And yet, despite it all, how true to form he runs! How thin the veneer of the years! How quickly he reverts to type! Despite our boasted civilization, the savage lurks within him still.

Study man. You'll find him worthy of your keenest intelligence.

What, then, of woman?

Study her, too, if you desire. But bring to the task the knowledge that you'll not understand her, for she does not understand herself.

The sixty-seven million have rendered her an enigma.

With Reverse English

WITH REVERSE ENGLISH

THE door closed on the last of his guests — the “farewell party” was over. It had been a success, he thought whimsically, as he gazed at the debris they had left behind — the remnants of a midnight supper, dead “soldiers” from the reserves, cigarette butts, cigar ashes. . . .

His hand still tingled with the firm clasp that went with their congratulations. There had been good-natured raillery, of course; but he knew that each one of those friends, tried and true, had been sincere in their well wishes.

So this was the end of bachelor life! Within a few hours he would take the second degree — become a benedict. And after that, farewell to the old order of things, to the free life and the gay life. He would settle down — there would be a family, perhaps; — he would shoulder new responsibilities.

A picture of *the Girl* smiled at him from the mantel. He took it down: gazed at it long and earnestly. His thoughts travelled the lanes of the years. At times he smiled at the recollections that came; again, he winced as he glimpsed corners of his life still littered with rubbish.

The chime of the hour finally broke his reverie. “A few hours more and you will be mine, dear Girl,” he whispered; “but *I am not worthy of you!*”

.

Elsewhere in that city, that night, *the Girl*, lovely in her negligee, performed the last rites. There was a little bundle of letters to be read for the last time, sighed over and laid on the fire. They belonged now to the life of the past. There were little bundles of thoughts to be untied, too, sorted over and joyed in for a few brief moments.

There had been many men who had meant many things in her life until *the* man came, and in these few delicious hours left of her freedom she felt that there was no injustice if she let a last remembrance of them sweep over her.

So she communed with the past until the chime of the hour finally broke her reverie. "A few hours more and I will be his," she whispered; "but *I am not worthy of him!*"

.

The door closed on the last of his guests — the "victory party" was over. It had been a success, he thought, as he remembered the rollicking "boys and girls" who had participated.

His hand still tingled with the firm clasp that went with their congratulations. There had been good-natured raillery, of course; but he knew that each one of those friends had been sincere in their well wishes.

So this was the beginning of freedom! Only a few hours past he had received the third degree — become a divorced man. And now, hail to the new order of things — to the free life and the gay life! For five years he had settled down — but now! . . .

A picture of *the* Wife That Was stared at him — a stranger — from the mantel. He took it down — crumpled it in his hand — cast it on the fire. His thoughts travelled the rough road of those years of domestic life. Certainly, from the beginning, it had been a mistake. They never had been suited to one another. Little things, at first, proved that. How soon they had become bigger things — too big to overlook!

Well, it was over, thank God! "A few hours back we

called it 'quits,' old girl!" he exclaimed; "for *you were not worthy of me!*"

.
Elsewhere in that city, that night, *the* Wife That Was performed the new rites. There were letters to be written; broken threads to be mended; a new course to be charted. These belonged to the life of the future. There were bundles of thoughts, too, to be sorted over and laid away in the store-house of forgotten things.

There had been many men who had meant many things in her life until *the* Husband That Was had wrecked it, and in the delicious hours of her new freedom she felt there was justice in the thought that this might yet mean future happiness.

Well, it was over, thank God! "And to think that a few hours back I was tied to him!" she exclaimed; "yet *he was not worthy of me!*"

Digits and Deeds

DIGITS AND DEEDS

IN a great council room, in a magnificent building, in the world's richest city, a group of men sat around a table. Before them, on the mahogany, were many papers, each covered with figures. These were the leaders in business and finance of a nation. And figures were the coign of their financial capitol, as figures were the coin of their business capital.

Their business finished, they broke up, gathered in little groups, went their way. And all each took with him was figures.

But let us, with occult eye, look thru, and beyond, those figures. Figures which were to them but the ancient digits of trade; figures which will be to us but the symbols of bigger things.

From that room, in that building, that city, there radiated hundreds of invisible arteries, pulsating with life.

These led to cities, states, countries — girdled the globe. And, wherever they led, the rich red blood which was sent coursing thru them came from the hearts of *men*.

Girder upon girder, *men* raised to imposing heights buildings that were destined to be the landmarks of cities; or, brick upon brick and stone upon stone, brought into being huge manufacturing plants.

Across vast plains *men* pushed their way, day by day, leaving behind them a trail of steel, over which was to pass the traffic, human and freight, of the years.

In the waste places of the earth, *men* — unkempt, reduced to almost the primitive, save for their loyal hearts — cleared forests, drained swamps, bridged rivers, damned and

dammed, but ever pushed on, that civilization — and business — might follow.

Everywhere, in the countless enterprises of magnates and money, *men* were engaged — leaving behind them, for the most part, the comforts of home and society, that the work of the world might be done.

But, back in that room, in that building, that city, the sum total of their herculean endeavor, their sacrifice, their achievement, their sweat and their blood — was *figures*!

Figures and figures and figures — digits arranged in varying sequence, with marks of dollars or tons or miles or what not before them — how cold and unresponsive a thing they are!

Figures and figures and figures — figures of men, stalwart, up-standing, red-blooded, sacrificing, loyal — how warm and responsive a thing to contemplate!

Calvary

CALVARY

TALL and straight in the forest it grew — as a good tree should; — but it sighed as it swayed in the wind, for it longed to be what it never could be — a tinsel, glittering Christmas Tree.

Tall and straight in the world he grew — as a good man should; — but he sighed as he did the daily task, for he longed to be what he never could be — a wonderful Man of Destiny.

Oh Man! Oh Tree! How blessed is thy Calvary!

A Postlude of the Post

A POSTLUDE OF THE POST

SO old John sat and rocked in the willow rocker on the tiny porch of his little cottage and gazed out into the dusk of a June night — with eyes that saw not, with ears that heard not, with the grim specter of a hope that was not.

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As far back as one's memory ran, it seemed, old John had brought the mail. Day by day, rain or shine, hot or cold, one could expect him at certain hours — steady, reliable, as sure as death and taxes.

John must have been always old. At least one could never think of him as young. His shoulders were hunched with the constant drag of his bag of mail (tons there had been of it thru the years!). His step was that of a plodder, the spring of it long since departed in the thousands of miles he had travelled as he made his rounds.

Perhaps his uniform was new now and then, but it never seemed so. The new would so quickly settle into the wrinkles and creases and wear of the old that one quite merged with the other.

The world moved about and around old John. His life never varied. His was a routine, a rut, an endless succession of the same things day after day. Seasons came and went, years ran their course, even decades, it seemed, passed by — but for him there was an unvarying monotony.

Daily he handed out his pieces and parcels of mail. He had seen sons grow to fathers and then to grandfathers, with their sons in business with them. He had seen small concerns develop into big organizations. He had witnessed

family comedies and tragedies. He had been the spectator at many of the community's successes and reverses.

His had been the hand that had unknowingly dealt out happiness and sorrow; that had brought the first spark of recognition to one who rejoiced that he had been found, the last word from one who despaired in his loss.

There was infinite pathos in the life of old John, yet he never realized it nor did it dawn upon those whom he served. To him life had become simply a treadmill — a struggle for existence — and he a cog in a machine. To others he was just old John, the postman — a sight to which they had grown so accustomed that he ceased to represent anything human and was merely part of a system.

Years before — I cannot even hazard a guess — when he entered the service it had seemed a real opportunity. True, the pay was small, even then, but his wants were few and it did not cost much to live. Moreover, here was a *sure* job — working for the Government — a job that he could depend upon.

As time went on and he was graduated from a cadetship to the responsibility of a route of his own, his pay was increased. Then it was he decided he could afford to set up a little home. So he married — a sensible girl, without much vision perhaps, but a good helpmate for a man who expected little of the world and received that little with gratitude.

But this is not a chronological history of the life of old John. Neither is it a story. Call it an incident if you must give it a name. I prefer to think of it simply as a postlude —

For as years went by, the price of the right to existence mounted steadily upward, but John's ability to pay that

price remained where it had been always — back somewhere in musty archives where lay compilations of the long ago.

True, he had received several little boosts in pay, but they had made no material difference. Still the two ends barely met, for what was \$1400 when there was a family to care for and everything had increased two, three, ten times over the days of \$1400 salaries ?

There were many reasons why he could not be paid more. He heard them patiently. But John did not understand politics, or finance, or making a showing, or why it cost more to handle one class of mail than another. All John knew was that he was struggling to achieve the impossible; that others — friends of his youth who had learned trades — had received increases in wages thru the years that enabled them to keep abreast with the pace of living; that all he had to show for his long and faithful service was the prospect of a little pension in the future, and the reality of a present burden that he could not bear.

It was too late to turn his hand to other things; to seek a new field where there were opportunities to make a wage commensurate with the demands upon him. He was only a postman — skilled in nothing save the duties of his daily routine — too old to learn a trade — too single-gauged thru the life he had led to broaden into other activities.

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So old John sat and rocked in the willow rocker on the tiny porch of his little cottage and gazed out into the dusk of a June night — with eyes that saw not, with ears that heard not, with the grim specter of a hope that was not.

Author's Note: Since this was written old John's pay has been increased to \$1800, but I'm afraid it has come too late to make much difference in his life.

The Quest

THE QUEST

HIS quest had been world-wide. And his quest had been life-vain. He remembered when the urge of it first came upon him. It was in his youth — in that gray youth of his — when there was not even a tiny rift in the dark clouds of his future.

He recalled how he had stood outside the door of the only home he had ever known — the home that was to be his no more — and with clenched hands, with a heart wherein there waged a tumult of emotions, had resolved that he would find it; that he would make it his own; that it would reside in his house of life thruout the years.

That was years ago and in the span of them he had ranged the earth and cruised the seven seas. Sometimes it had seemed almost within his grasp; once he felt that he possessed it, and was content. But, always, in the end, it eluded him. Like a will-o'-the-wisp it danced before him, only to lead his eager footsteps into sloughs of despond.

He had sought it in fortune — but with the attainment of wealth it had fled faster than before.

He had sought it in love, where he was told others had found it — but, while it hovered almost within his grasp, his love palled and it hurried away.

He had sought it in life and gayety, in “wine, women and song” — but when he clutched it to his heart he found it was only a counterfeit.

He had sought it in the open places of the earth; in the forest; by the stream, with only the wind and the stars for

companions — but the thoughts he conjured in those vast silences kept it away.

So he had gone, thru the years; at first eager-eyed and expectant, then with the shadow of many disappointments upon his face, and finally with that look in his eyes which was the acknowledgment of abandoned hope.

But, in the end, he found it — and the close of the quest was thus:

One night he dreamed a dream. Before him a Patriarch appeared, wise, and kindly of mien. And he spoke to him, saying: “My son, yours has been a fruitless quest — the *pursuit of Happiness*. And yet, it need not have been, for Happiness has been always within your reach. Seek it no further than the round of your every-day life.”

With a beneficent smile he was gone.

The dreamer pondered the message when he awoke to the tasks of the day. His mind dwelt upon it as he sat at his desk in his office — “You need seek no further than the round of your every-day life.”

But it was not until he was plunged into a vortex of business that demanded his every waking hour that the hidden meaning in his dream came home to him —

Happiness — true Happiness — was in his *Work!*

And, as the remaining years went by, he found it so to the uttermost part.

The Parable of the Position

THE PARABLE OF THE POSITION

ONCE upon a time, Luck, Connivance and Fortune, in sportive mood, came upon a little man who was bewailing his fate. "Oh that I might be somebody; that I might hold a position in life that would bring me the homage of men!" was the burden of his plaint.

"What a shame," said they, hearing him, "that this poor mortal should not have such a simple wish gratified"

So Luck brought an important position his way; Connivance helped him along, and Fortune made it possible for him to secure it.

Then they went their way, laughing, for they had played such tricks before.

Before the Position came the little man was just little. After he got it he became small. I trust you catch the distinction.

With the position went honor and homage. Hence, when the little man got it, he caused his name to be scrolled in gold on his door and he withdrew from contact with the world, as befitted his station. When he was seen it was only thru the good offices of Appointment; and even then he kept a tiresome servant, called Waiting, in the anteroom of his House.

You've met little men like our little man, but our little man outpointed them all. He grew every day — in his estimation — until the Position became, not the gift of Luck, Connivance and Fortune, but only a belated tribute to his genius.

And as this thought persisted and grew, he expanded

with it until people gave him another name than that which he had been christened — and the name was Insufferable.

But the little man never realized this until one day, with Ambition as counsel, he had words with his Position.

“Position,” he said, “you are unworthy of me. I am fitted for bigger things. Go summon other Positions, that I may pick and choose one more befitting my talents.”

But his Position only smiled.

“Listen!” it commanded. “You are like many men who have held me — confused in your understanding. When you got me *I* brought you honor and homage. You did not create them. They are part of me. They go where I go. They’re bestowed only when I bestow them. Without me you are nothing — a little man, as I found you.

“If you had realized this — respected me and what I represent — all would have gone well with you. Other and greater Positions than I would have sought you. But no, you — inflated with egotism — confused our identities.

“Before you held me men looked upon me with kindly eyes, for I represented something to command their respect. Now I have suffered in prestige, because you have been unworthy of me. The fault is yours, but for the time I must share it with you.

“Go! — get out of me! — and learn, thru your friend, (though you will not think him such, being unseeing), Bitter Experience, that all I have said is true. Learn, little man of little comprehension, that Positions make men as well as men make Positions!

“And when the light of comprehension comes, with it may come the understanding also that in life you deal with

Positions, not with those who occupy them, for Positions remain long after their one-time occupants are forgotten.”

Thus endeth the lesson.

I Will !

I WILL!

THE man turned over a page in the book of his life and with a bold, free hand wrote at its top the date of a new year. Then, with a smile that was half whimsical and half sorrowful, he leaved thru the preceding pages — forty in all.

In the earlier pages there were few entries; but from the twentieth page the record became increasingly voluminous.

There were blots and erasures and revisions sprinkled here and there thru the text ; but withal, the record was a fairly clean one.

With a sigh he turned back to the fresh, clean page and the new year. Then, after a moment's hesitation, after the date he had written he wrote:

I WILL —

There he paused. In his mind were the old resolutions — the resolutions so often made and so seldom kept — the resolutions that had become almost a matter of habit with him at the beginning of each year of his life.

I WILL —

The words took on a new significance as he gazed at them. They suddenly stood alone — an entity — vibrant with life, pregnant with meaning, powered with purpose.

I WILL!

From some inner consciousness the words came to him — “I am Master of my Fate.”

“What I WILL to be I *will* be,” he repeated softly.

I WILL!

A strange new power welled within him. He stretched out his arms. They seemed to compass the world. He felt a thrill of mastery such as he had never known.

I WILL!

The words leaped to his brain as a message from the Unknown; a call, a command, in this hour, to fulfill the promise of his destiny.

I WILL!

His mind groped with the amazing wonder of the revelation that had come to him. He flung aside the record of his forty years. What a pitiful estate was his! What a wastrel he had been with his possibilities, his opportunities, his -birthright! How he had stumbled thru the years, content with mediocrity, never coming to the greatest truth of life until this belated hour!

I WILL!

He cried aloud with the sheer joy of it. He intoned the magic words again and again — *I WILL! — I WILL! — I WILL! —*

And somewhere in the vast spaces beyond his ken were those who rejoiced with him; for they knew, too, that he had found the key that unlocks the door of the House of Life.

Daughters of Duty

DAUGHTERS OF DUTY

THIS is the story of Anna, but it could be just as well the story of Alice, or Elizabeth, or Margaret. The name does n't matter. Anna, for our purpose, stands for all of her unfortunate sisters.

Anna and I are about of an age. We were children together — playmates — and shared childish confidences. She knew the high ambitions that were mine. I knew the dreams she hoped would become realities — dreams that ever had a fairy prince in them.

The maternal instinct was strong within her. She loved dolls passionately. A suffering creature brought the tenderest emotion. And she would croon over a baby with a motherliness that was touching to see.

As time went on Anna grew into a comely maid. She was popular with the young folks of the village and did not lack for suitors. But it was then the shadow fell across her life, and the burden upon her shoulders — a shadow and a burden with her to this day.

The two were one — her mother! Young men came, with serious intent, but none was good enough for Anna, in her mother's eyes, and none was venturesome enough to fight his way. One was poor and would never get along in the world; another was of doubtful antecedents; another was too crude; another too young; another too old: all would take her from her mother's side.

Perhaps her mother might have been suited with some spineless male endowed with the world's goods who would have provided a home for both Anna and her mother and catered to the idiosyncrasies of the latter — but such never came a-wooing.

Anna was a dutiful daughter. Oh, the heartaches and the ashed hopes of the daughters of duty! She loved her mother, as mother natures such as hers do love, and in that affection buried all of self.

So time went on, and Anna passed from a budding girlhood to a full-blown womanhood. The boys and girls of her youth married and settled down in the village or departed into the world. The oncoming generation could not accept her as part of their day — youth must be served. Thus she grew into the life of the village as one who had taken the vows of spinsterhood. And, if you know village life, you know this means almost the confines of convent walls and the isolation of the veil.

She might have become a teacher, or a nurse, or a clerk, or a stenographer, but the very thought of *her daughter* working — “earning a living,” as she put it — was abhorrent to the mother. So Anna merely drifted on, one day the same as another, as days are apt to be in quiet communities; a bit of driftwood on the sea of life and yet the victim of the paradox that she was ever in a sheltered harbor.

Her mother grew querulous and old. Her demands became more exacting; her pleasure more difficult to serve. But she would have been the last to believe that she had not been fair with Anna. She would have protested her love — a mother love so great that it had encompassed her child all her life, safeguarded and sheltered her from the world.

Those who know the Annas of life — and they are legion — know that such a love is a love of self that may be well called the supreme selfishness. A love so self-centered and so cruel that it will sacrifice a life that never asked to be, to be a life of endless sacrifice.

Duty to a parent — what a tragedy it may become! In youth a silken fetter, perhaps, held lightly in the hands of love. At middle-age shackles of steel, locked with selfishness, to which Death alone holds the key.

Daughters of duty — robbed of the divine right of motherhood, of a home of your own, of self-expression, of the fulfillment of dreams, of the realization of hopes, of all that you were God-granted the right to attain — my heart goes out to you in sympathy, as it has gone these many years to Anna, playmate and confidante of youth!

Where the Fourth is First

WHERE THE FOURTH IS FIRST

I WENT home for the Fourth. A city's no place to celebrate that glorious occasion. A city's too big — too big to get the spirit of youth, to frolic and make merry. A city never can quite quit taking itself too seriously.

So I went home for the Fourth — back to the small town where they knew me when I wore short pants — and went barefooted — and never suspected that destiny waited 'round the corner.

Of course the town has changed. They are proud of their "little city" and will tell you about the industries located there and what a hustling, bustling place it has become.

Many of the old landmarks are gone. Scores of the old residents have passed away. Streets have been paved. There are electric lights. A traction line traverses the main thoroughfare. Farmers do their Saturday shopping with automobiles and have deliveries made by parcel post. Picture shows face the Public Square. Things are modern — very —

But —

The spirit of the town has not changed. With all the improvements — all the development the march of civilization brings invariably — the spirit of the small town remains. A spirit of neighborliness that your city man cannot understand if he has never known it and your small town man never can quite forget.

I found there were "big doings" scheduled for the day. The Fourth was always an important occasion there as far back as I can remember; but this Fourth was to out-Fourth

any that had ever preceded it. It was to be the supreme effort of the old town — something for residents to use as a comparison for years to come.

And it was. I'll say it was!

Starting at six-thirty in the morning with a flag-raising, there was something doing every minute until ten o'clock at night.

There was a parade — a real parade with floats and delegations from the D. A. R. and the G. A. R. and every other organization of any importance — and an old-fashioned barbecue — and a picnic — and horse racing at the Fair Grounds — and ball games — and a band concert on the Public Square — and fireworks — and everything!

And there were crowds and crowds of people — fat people and lean people — cool looking people and perspiring people — important people and plain people — people, people, people — the kind of people that make up the bulk of the population of these great United States.

Neighborly people, I always think of them. Plain, substantial, real. The kind of folks that home folks ought to be — without frills or feathers — without affectation or ostentation — honestly glad to see you, really regretful to have you go.

And — I almost forgot the most important thing of all — there were fire-crackers. Not cannon crackers, but the little Chinese variety that I used to delight in as a boy. The kind that about half of them fail to explode and you make "fizzers" of them. I hadn't had the never-to-be-forgotten scent of a pack of them for years.

Perhaps I'm in the minority, but I am one of those who was never "keen" for this new-fangled notion of a "sane"

Fourth of July. I realize that the blessed privilege of making a noise on this national occasion was abused, but it seemed to me always they might have left at least the little fire-crackers and the "nigger chasers" for some of us who refuse to grow up.

As a boy I think I put the Fourth above any other "day of days." Christmas was fine; New Year, Decoration Day, St. Patrick's Day, Washington's Birthday, and the like, occasions to be observed. But it was the Fourth to which I looked forward with the keenest expectancy; for which I hoarded my pennies with the most ardor, and which I enjoyed with the greatest delight.

Somehow I have a feeling that the children of this generation have lost something in not knowing the "insane" Fourth as I knew it. In not getting up at the break of day to light a piece of punk for those fire-crackers shot off under father's and mother's windows to awaken them; in not touching off, in the dusk of the evening, those long-cherished roman candles and sky rockets and bewildering pin-wheels. What fun can there be possibly in watching professionals manage elaborate displays of intricate set pieces, regardless of the beautiful effects obtained?

But I did not set out to write a brief for an "insane" Fourth.

On the contrary, I just wanted to tell you that I went home for the Fourth.

And I'm only sorry you could n't have gone home with me.

The Answer

THE ANSWER

THE Board of Directors left the meeting room, singularly quiet and depressed. Instead of the banter and laughter that usually marked the close of a session there was only a procession of silent men — like a funeral procession.

For the news they had just heard within that room was news that stunned them; that came as a stroke of misfortune they could not comprehend; that stripped them, for the time, of their gift of tongue and their grasp of emergencies.

The President had resigned!

Thru the vast plant the news traveled. First a whisper; then, as the rumor gained momentum and confirmation, a tumult of speculation that grew and grew in volume until it was the topic of the hour.

The President resigned! Men in the shops ceased work and drew together in excited groups. In the offices, the lowliest clerks to the highest department heads stood stunned with the blow.

The “Old Man” was going. Even the oldest employee could not remember when he had n’t been there. It seemed he was the very inception of the business — why, he was the business itself, its head, its heart, its life! Without him how could there be any business, as without a father how could there be a head to a family?

True, they knew he had been failing in health — his years were beginning to tell upon him. But, day in and day out, he was at his desk — in that old room they all knew so well — or thru the plant, with the same cheery word of the years for Tom and Charley and Mike — the whole host of them who had grown to love him in their decades of association.

It could not be — it must not be! The sentiment spread from group to group. Something should be done. Some action must be taken. The “Old Man” must be persuaded.

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Back in the room the Directors had left, a kindly-faced, gray-haired man, seemingly in the prime of life, sat in his big leather-faced chair and gazed out of the window — gazed on a maze of tracks, with fussy switch-engines and loaded cars moving here and there; gazed on scores of men hurrying to and fro; gazed on smoke and grime and industry.

But his vision went thru it and past it to that time when he sat in the self-same chair in a little wooden shack and gazed out of the window upon smiling meadow lands, picturing in his imagination the scene that today was real.

Over his face there passed the shadow of a smile. He brushed his hand across his eyes. This was the only life he knew — and he was leaving it.

A movement at the door caught his attention and drew him back to the world of realities. One by one a group of men filed into the room — most of them as old as he — some with working clothes and grimy hands — others of the “white collar” class.

Their spokesman — one of the oldest employees in the plant — told their story. They had heard — the whole plant had heard — that he was resigning. It must not be — it could not be! They needed him — now, in these days of disturbance, as never before. Of their own initiative they had come, from office and bench, to plead, if necessary, that he change his decision.

The “Old Man” sat motionless, but the knuckles of his hands showed white in their grip of the arms of the old

chair. When the appeal had ended he spoke, and there was a tremor in his voice:

“I have been honored thru life as I never deserved to be honored; but all the honors of all the years mean less than the fact that you have come here today — of your own accord — to ask this thing of me.

“But, men, it cannot be. They tell me that I have but a little while to live — to work or play. And I have elected to spend the days yet mine in play. To spend them with my family — that family I have cheated in the past years — cheated because I have given them so little of myself.

“So I have decided that you must go on without me. But this decision would not have been made if it had not been for one thing. And that thing — that stabilizing thought — I leave with you as my bequest.

“In the years I have been associated with you, I have not wrought with steel or iron or brass. These materials you have fabricated for me — for the company — and so well that our products are known to the ends of the earth. But I have wrought with *men*. My life work has been the fabrication of human material. And I can safely, surely leave you now because I know that the product to which I have turned my hand and the little skill I possess has, too, turned out successfully.

“I can go now, knowing that the *men* this institution has made — men, tried and steadfast and true — will carry on that minor thing — the manufacture of inanimate things — just as well as though I were here.

“You will miss me. For that I thank God as a most precious heritage of the years. But the business will not

miss me, after the first slight re-adjustment, for the business is bigger than any man could be — the business is the sum total, the composite, of many men — men forged in its crucible — tempered, true-cutting tools.”

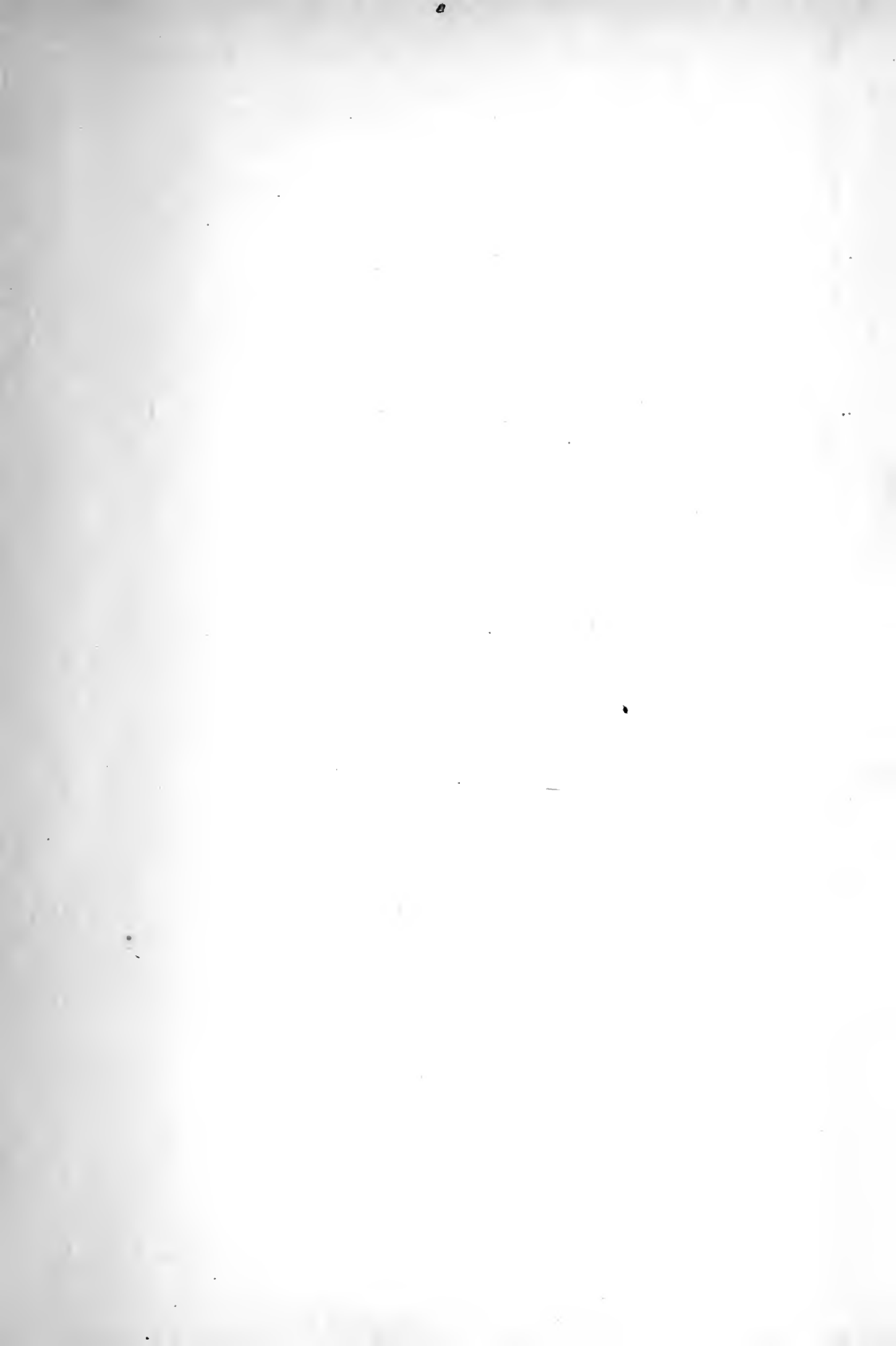
The President ceased. The men, realizing the futility of speech and glimpsing the greater thing, filed silently from the room, gripping his hand as they went.

Oh, would that this story might have its counterpart thruout the length and breadth of the land; that the belching smoke of every plant might token to the world — here *MEN* are made!

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